DARK MOON RISING

BATMAN

& The MONSTER MEN

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BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE

And such utter carnage?

The charnel reek hangs stale and silent in the air.

Most of the victims suffered limbs torn right from their sockets.

Gigantic bite marks, similar to those on the woman found in the sewer, are clearly evident.

This was no massacre.

It was a feeding frenzy.

My purpose here was to instill further fear into Maroni's operations.

And once again shake down his enforcer, Richie Pantone.

Somebody beat me to it.

And again...

...the same coarse tufts of hair.

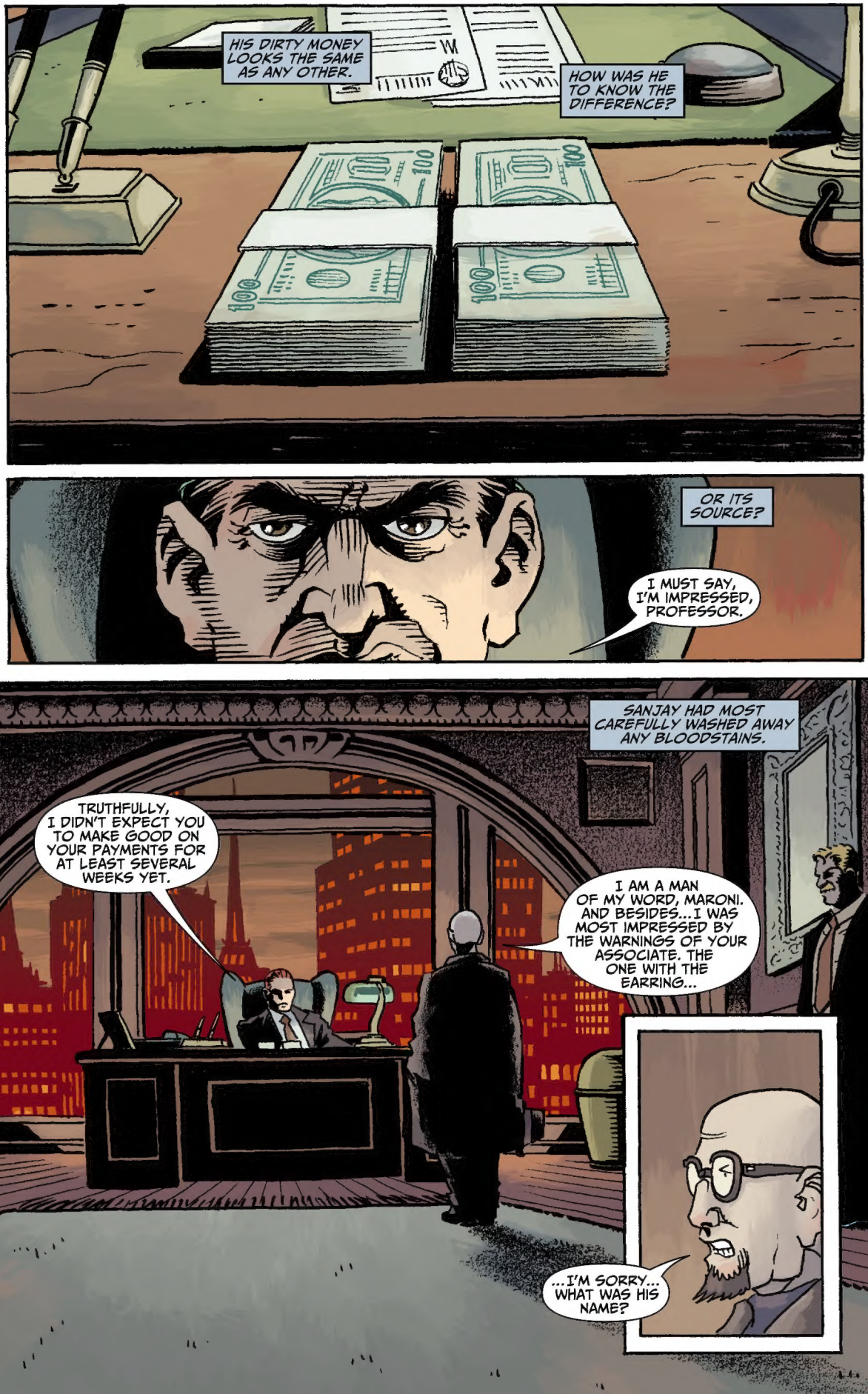
How could such a creature have entered unseen?

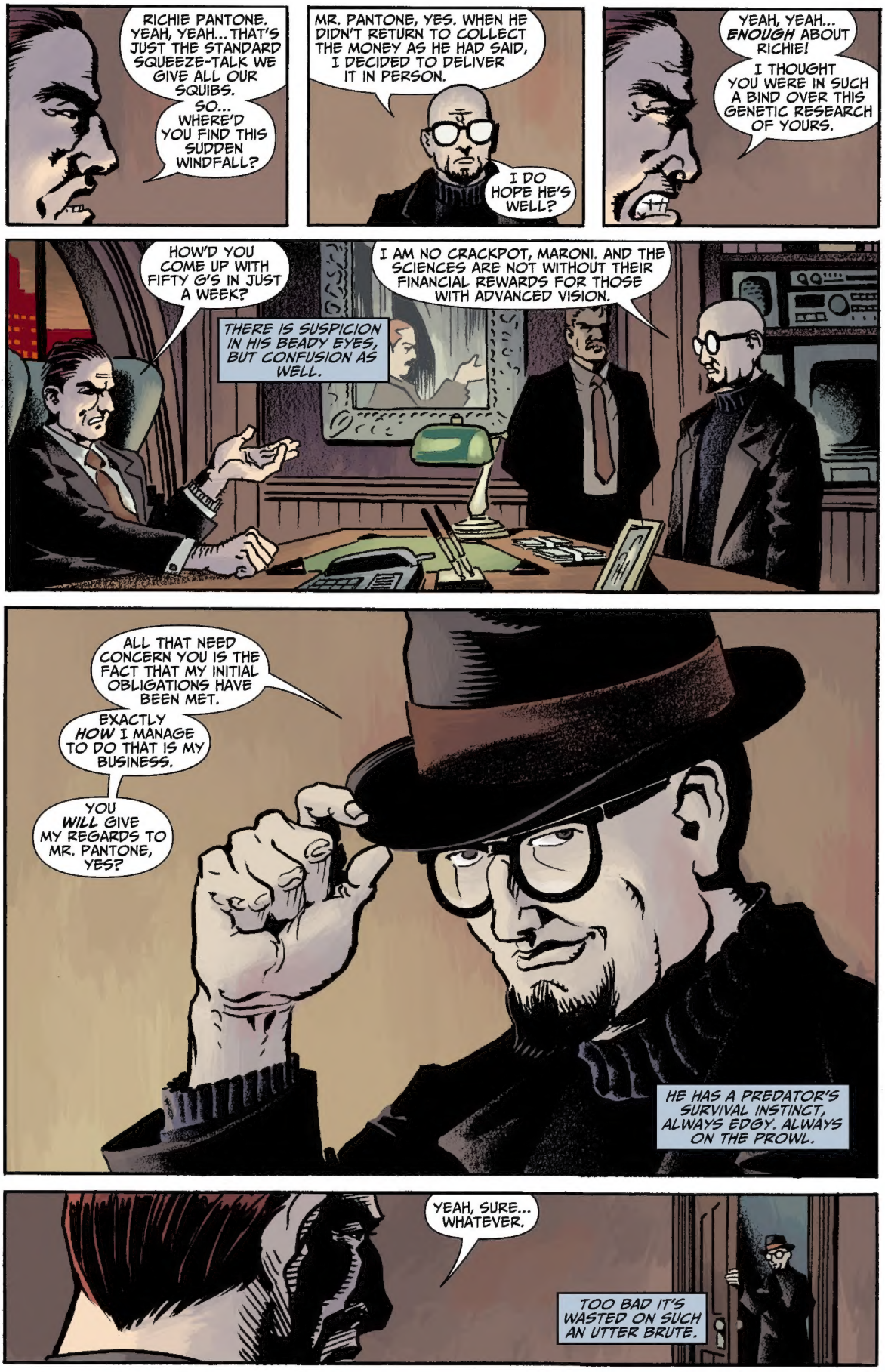
Evidence outside a hall window seems to say it scaled right up the wall.

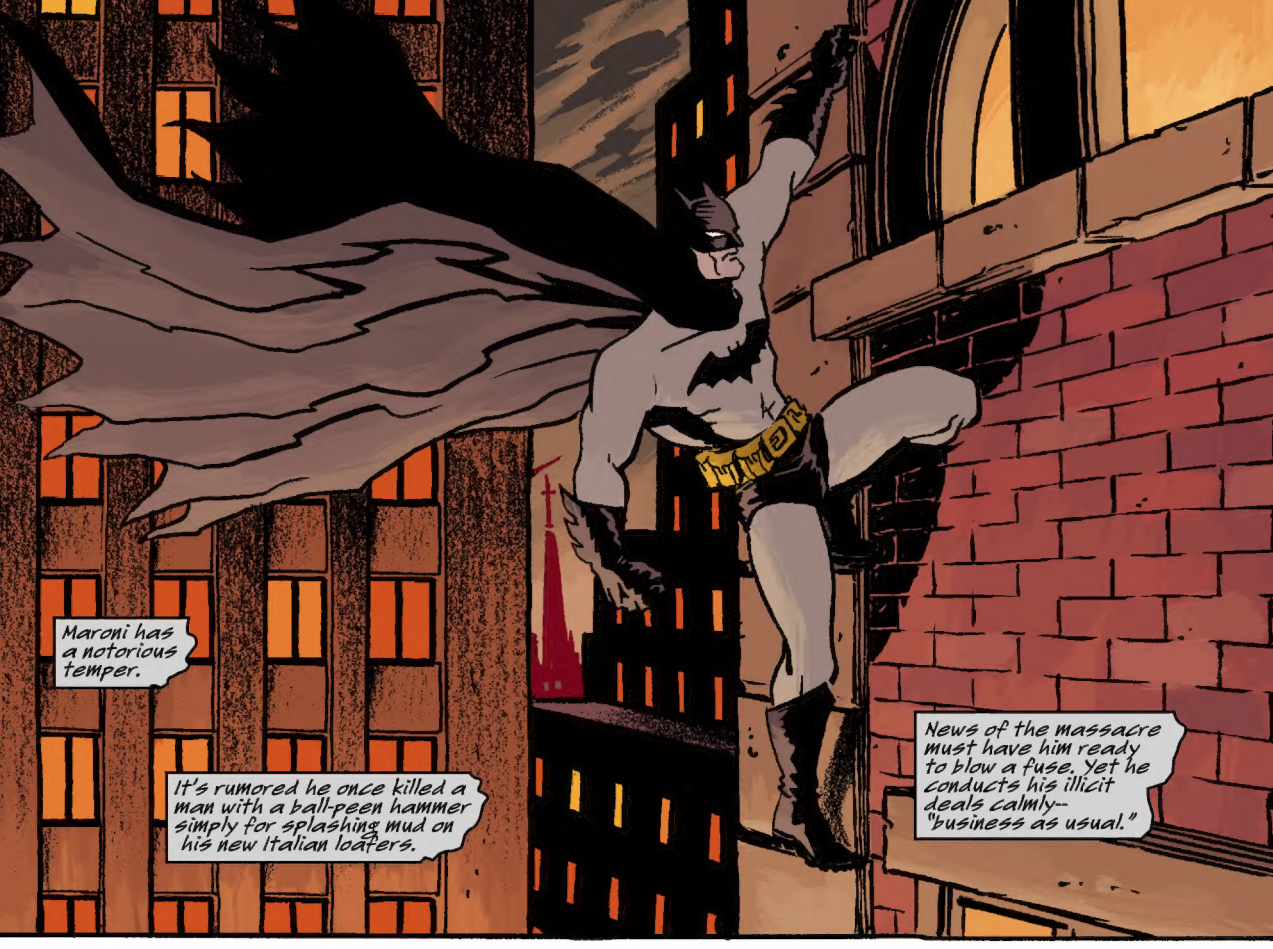
What am I facing?

JIM.

IT'S ME. THERE'S BEEN ANOTHER... ATTACK.


HIS DIRTY MONEY LOOKS THE SAME AS ANY OTHER.
HOW WAS HE TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE?
OR ITS SOURCE?
I MUST SAY, I'M IMPRESSED, PROFESSOR.
SANJAY HAD MOST CAREFULLY WASHED AWAY ANY BLOODSTAINS.
TRUTHFULLY, I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO MAKE GOOD ON YOUR PAYMENTS FOR AT LEAST SEVERAL WEEKS YET.
I AM A MAN OF MY WORD, MARONI. AND BESIDES...I WAS MOST IMPRESSED BY THE WARNINGS OF YOUR ASSOCIATE. THE ONE WITH THE EARRING...
...I'M SORRY... WHAT WAS HIS NAME?

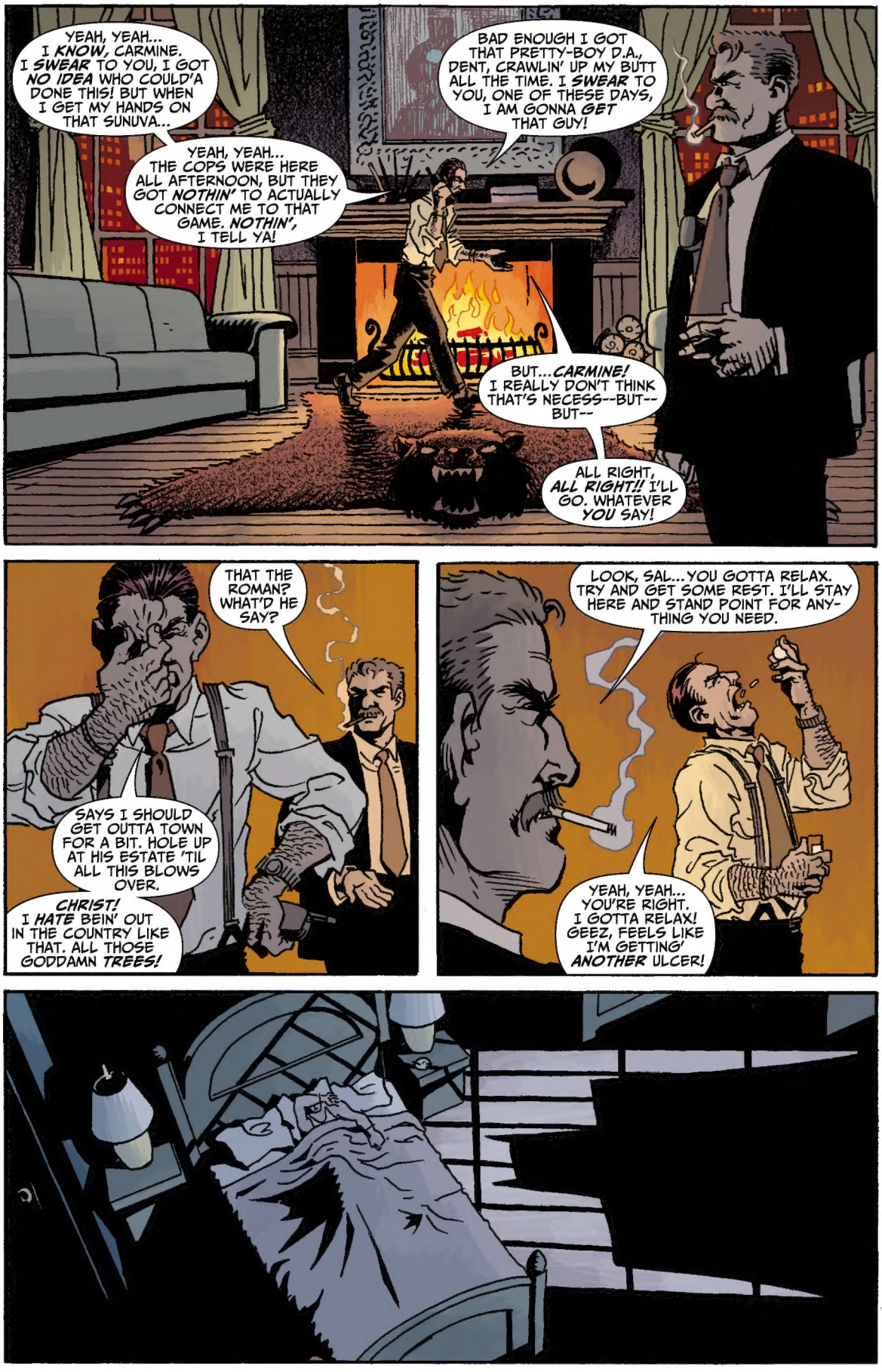

RICHIE PANTONE. YEAH, YEAH... THAT'S JUST THE STANDARD SQUEEZE-TALK WE GIVE ALL OUR SQUIBS. SO... WHERE'D YOU FIND THIS SUDDEN WINDFALL?
MR. PANTONE, YES. WHEN HE DIDN'T RETURN TO COLLECT THE MONEY AS HE HAD SAID, I DECIDED TO DELIVER IT IN PERSON.
I DO HOPE HE'S WELL?
YEAH, YEAH... ENOUGH ABOUT RICHIE!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE IN SUCH A BIND OVER THIS GENETIC RESEARCH OF YOURS.
HOW'D YOU COME UP WITH FIFTY G'S IN JUST A WEEK?
I AM NO CRACKPOT, MARONI. AND THE SCIENCES ARE NOT WITHOUT THEIR FINANCIAL REWARDS FOR THOSE WITH ADVANCED VISION.
THERE IS SUSPICION IN HIS BEADY EYES, BUT CONFUSION AS WELL.
ALL THAT NEED CONCERN YOU IS THE FACT THAT MY INITIAL OBLIGATIONS HAVE BEEN MET.
EXACTLY HOW I MANAGE TO DO THAT IS MY BUSINESS.
YOU WILL GIVE MY REGARDS TO MR. PANTONE, YES?
HE HAS A PREDATOR'S SURVIVAL INSTINCT, ALWAYS EDGY. ALWAYS ON THE PROWL.
YEAH, SURE... WHATEVER.
TOO BAD IT'S WASTED ON SUCH AN UTTER BRUTE.

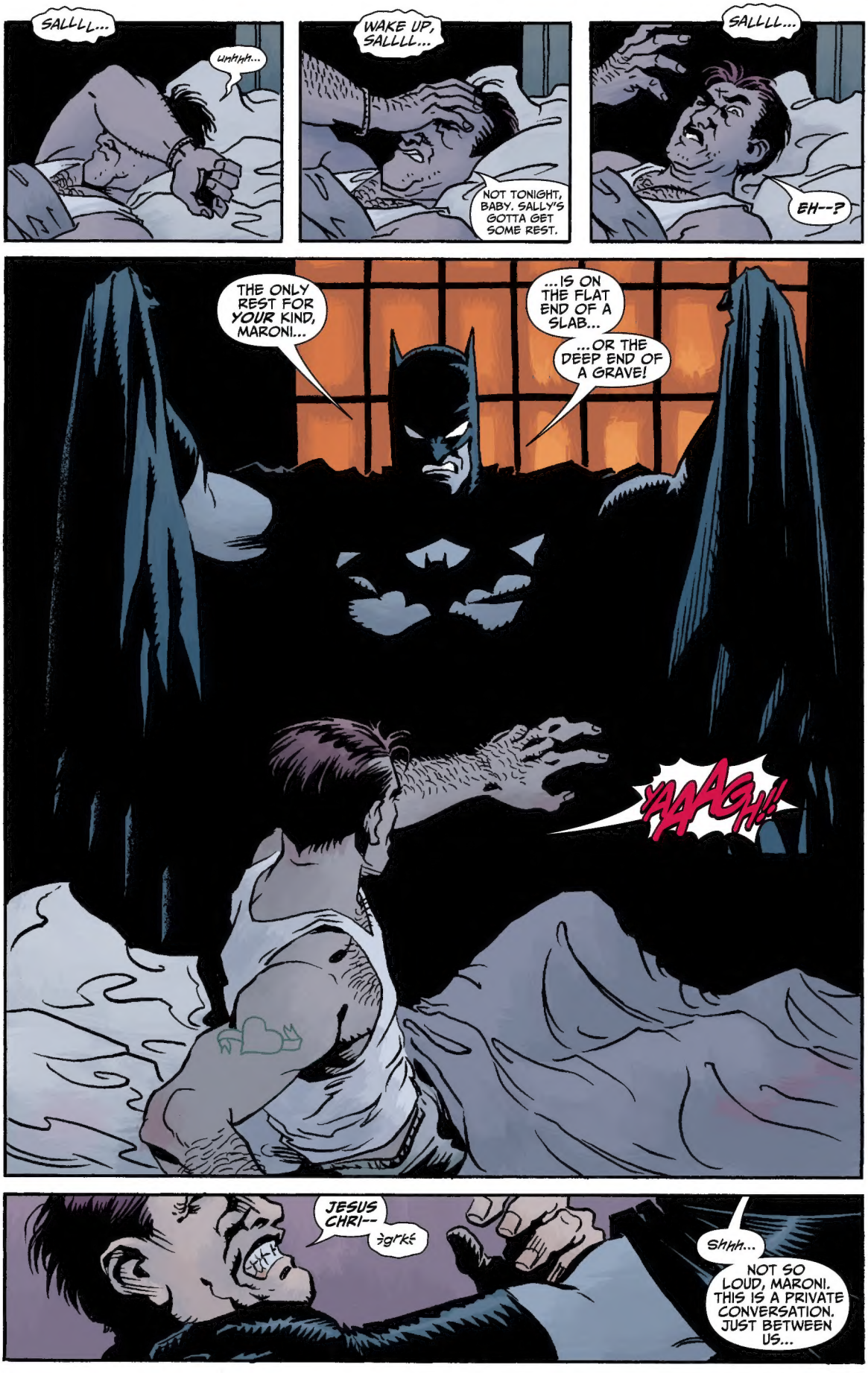

Maroni has a notorious temper.
It's rumored he once killed a man with a ball-peen hammer simply for splashing mud on his new Italian loafers.
News of the massacre must have him ready to blow a fuse. Yet he conducts his illicit deals calmly--"business as usual."

This visitor is a far cry from his USUAL associates.

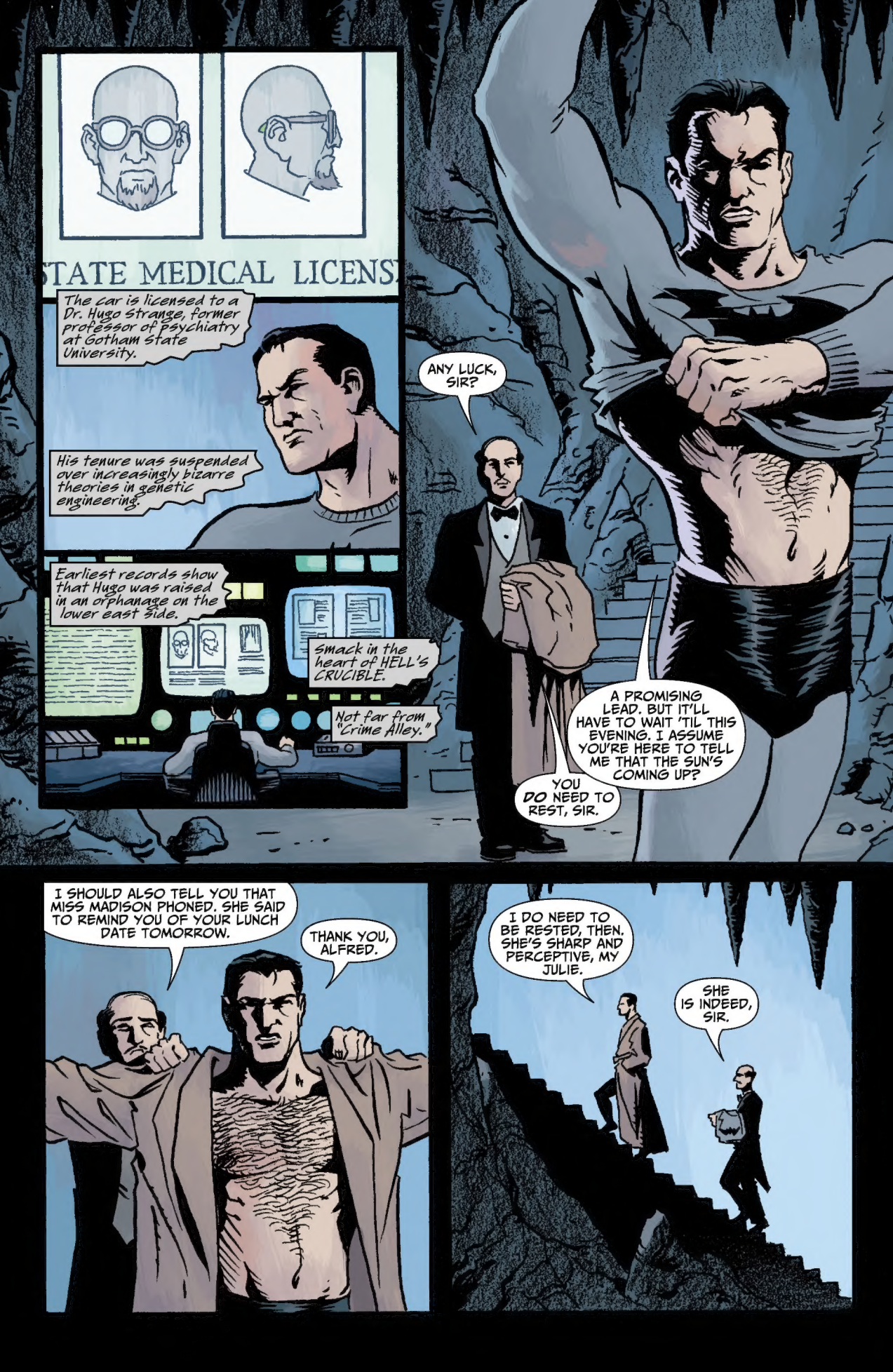
EMPIRE STATE
JV7-1C3

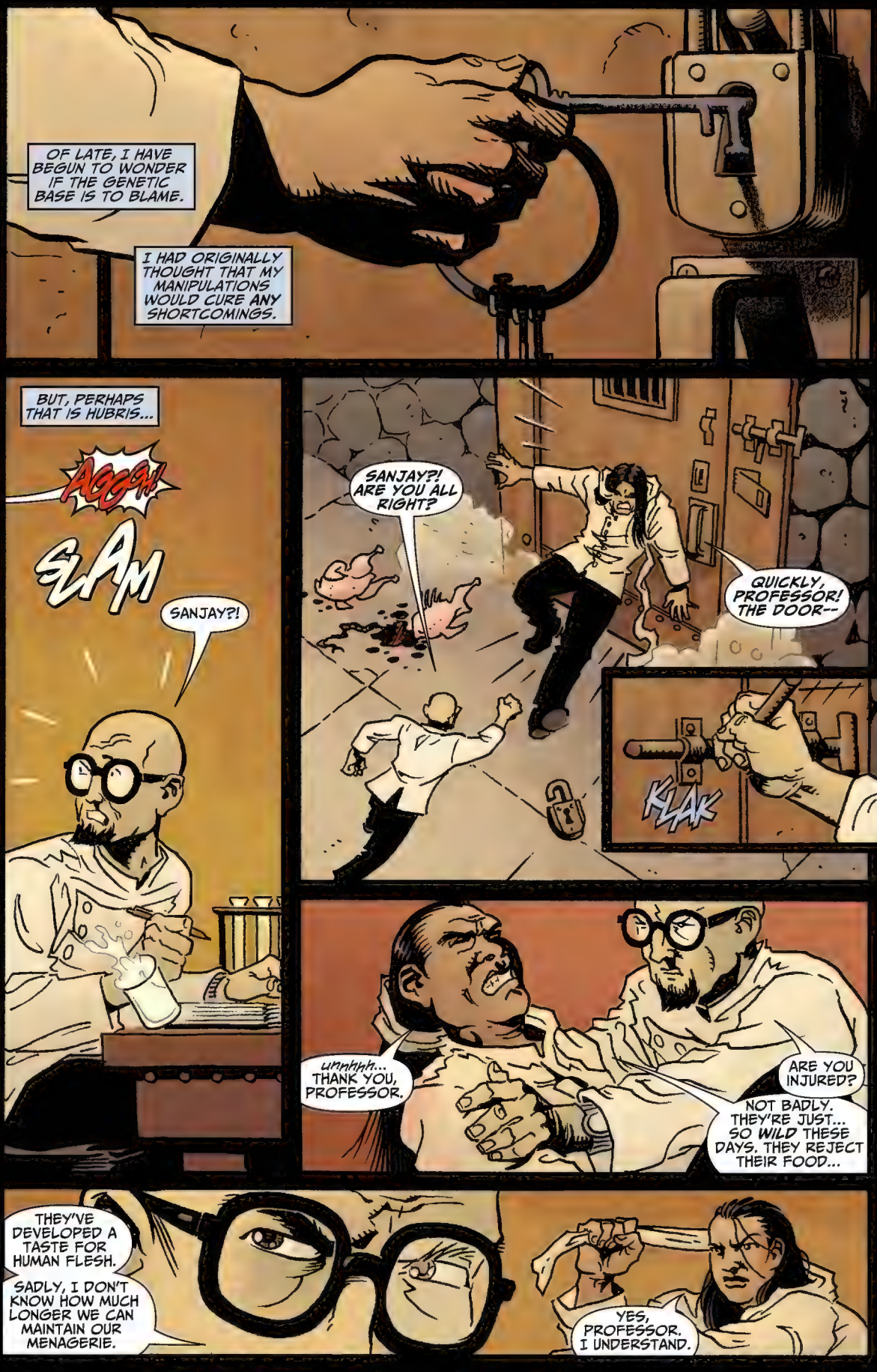
Time to crack that cool.

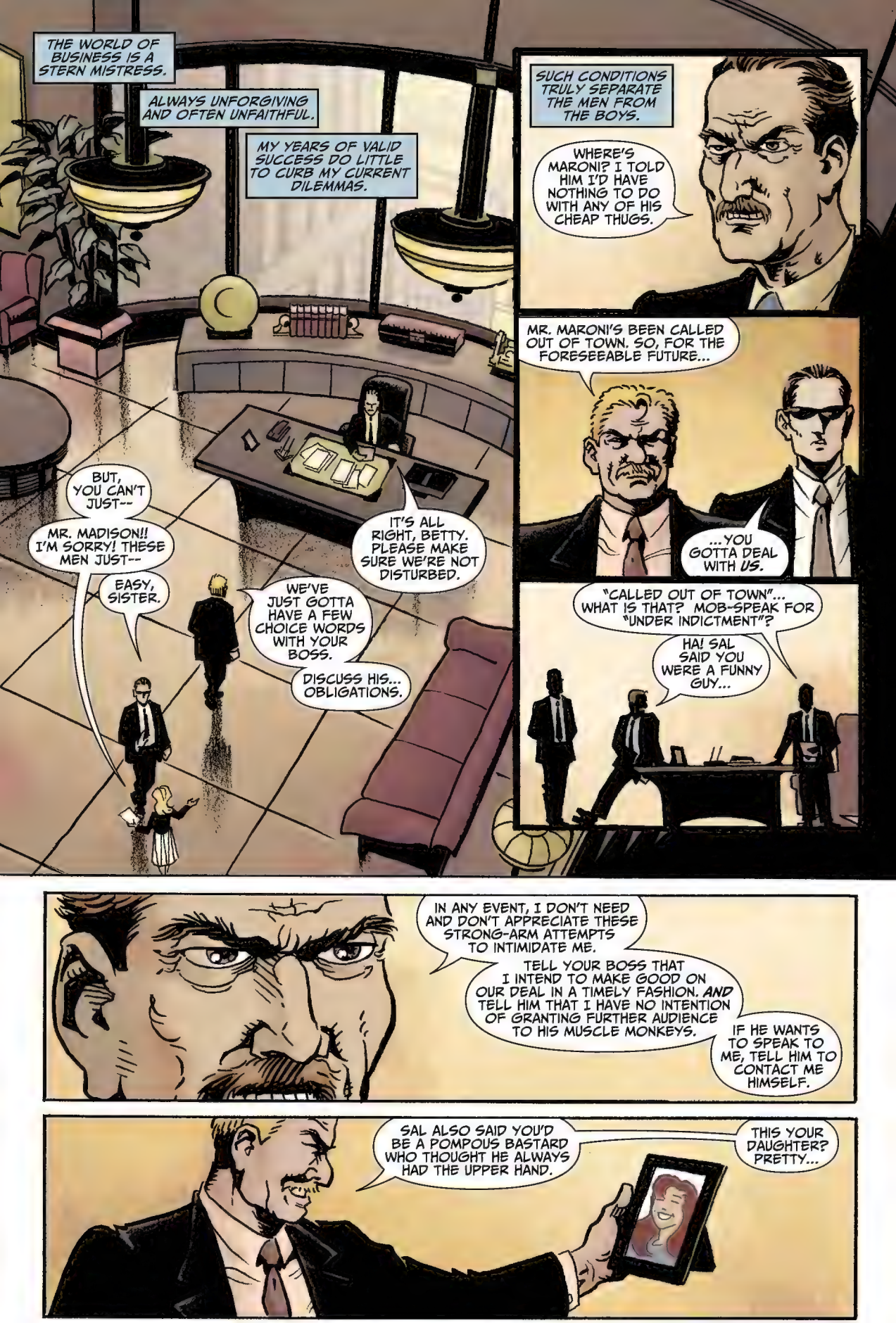

YEAH, YEAH... I KNOW, CARMINE. I SWEAR TO YOU, I GOT NO IDEA WHO COULD'A DONE THIS! BUT WHEN I GET MY HANDS ON THAT SUNUVA...
YEAH, YEAH... THE COPS WERE HERE ALL AFTERNOON, BUT THEY GOT NOTHIN' TO ACTUALLY CONNECT ME TO THAT GAME. NOTHIN', I TELL YA!
BAD ENOUGH I GOT THAT PRETTY-BOY D.A., DENT, CRAWLIN' UP MY BUTT ALL THE TIME. I SWEAR TO YOU, ONE OF THESE DAYS, I AM GONNA GET THAT GUY!
BUT... CARMINE! I REALLY DON'T THINK THAT'S NECESS--BUT-- BUT--
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT!! I'LL GO. WHATEVER YOU SAY!
THAT THE ROMAN? WHAT'D HE SAY?
SAYS I SHOULD GET OUTTA TOWN FOR A BIT. HOLE UP AT HIS ESTATE 'TIL ALL THIS BLOWS OVER.
CHRIST! I HATE BEIN' OUT IN THE COUNTRY LIKE THAT. ALL THOSE GODDAMN TREES!
LOOK, SAL... YOU GOTTA RELAX. TRY AND GET SOME REST. I'LL STAY HERE AND STAND POINT FOR ANY-THING YOU NEED.
YEAH, YEAH... YOU'RE RIGHT. I GOTTA RELAX! GEEZ, FEELS LIKE I'M GETTING' ANOTHER ULCER!


SALLLL...
UHHHH...
WAKE UP, SALLLL...
NOT TONIGHT, BABY. SALLY'S GOTTA GET SOME REST.
SALLLL...
EH--?
THE ONLY REST FOR YOUR KIND, MARONI...
...IS ON THE FLAT END OF A SLAB...
...OR THE DEEP END OF A GRAVE!
YAAAGH!!
JESUS CHRI--
SHHH...
NOT SO LOUD, MARONI. THIS IS A PRIVATE CONVERSATION. JUST BETWEEN US...

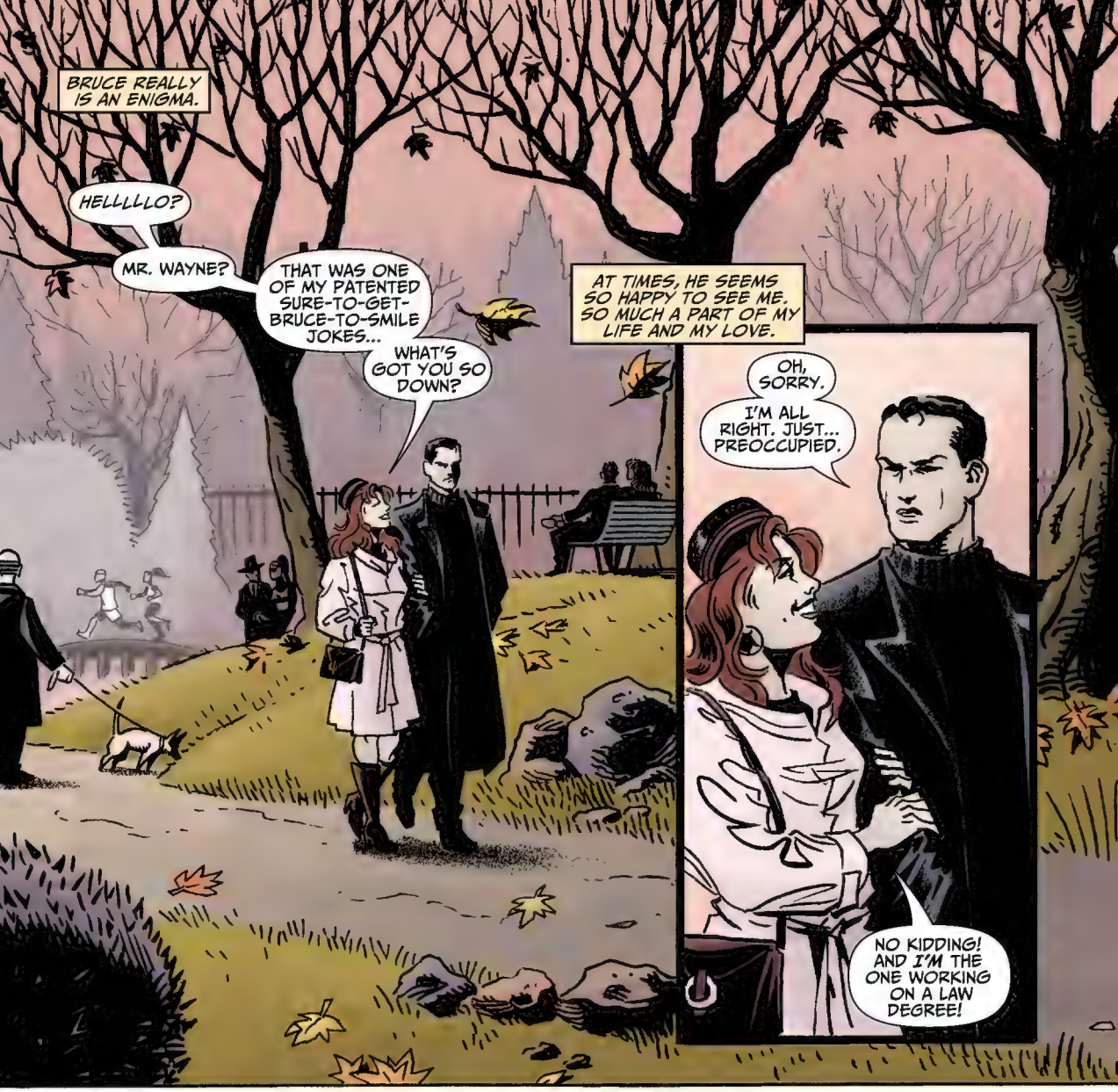
HOW'D... YOU GET... ǯgrkɛ...IN HERE?
NONE OF YOUR KIND ARE SAFE FROM ME, MARONI. NO MATTER WHAT HOLE YOU CRAWL INSIDE.
WH-- WHAT... ǯchkɛ... WHAT... DO YOU... WANT?
C-CAN'T... B-BREATHE...
WHO OR WHAT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS BLOODBATH?
GEEZ! WISH I KNEW! I'D... ǯghakɛ... DANCE ON HIS FACE WITH AN ICE PICK!
THERE'S NO REASON. NO MOTIVE...
YOU'RE FORGETTING THE OBVIOUS. THE CASH. A GAME LIKE THAT...
YOU'RE RIGHT! MUSTA BEEN FIFTY, SIXTY GRAND IN THAT ROOM...
STRANGE!
WHAT IS STRANGE?
OH... uh... NUTHIN'. IT'S JUST... STRANGE THAT I HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT.
DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH ME, MARONI!
I SWEAR TO YOU, I THOUGHT IT WAS A TURF STRIKE...
...I MEAN, WHAT KINDA ANIMAL TEARS UP PEOPLE LIKE THAT OVER MONEY?
GEEZ, THEY SAID RICHIE'S ENTIRE STOMACH WAS RIPPED OUT!
WHATEVER THE CAUSE, MARONI, SOMETHING IS OUT THERE THAT'S MORE BRUTAL THAN YOUR WILDEST DREAMS.
PERHAPS YOU SHOULD SAY A SMALL PRAYER THAT I'M AROUND TO STOP IT.
YEAH, YEAH... WHATEVER YOU SAY.


STATE MEDICAL LICENS
The car is licensed to a Dr. Hugo Strange, former professor of psychiatry at Gotham State University.
His tenure was suspended over increasingly bizarre theories in genetic engineering.
Earliest records show that Hugo was raised in an orphanage on the lower east side.
Smack in the heart of HELL'S CRUCIBLE.
Not far from "Crime Alley."
ANY LUCK, SIR?
A PROMISING LEAD. BUT IT'LL HAVE TO WAIT 'TIL THIS EVENING. I ASSUME YOU'RE HERE TO TELL ME THAT THE SUN'S COMING UP?
YOU DO NEED TO REST, SIR.
I SHOULD ALSO TELL YOU THAT MISS MADISON PHONED. SHE SAID TO REMIND YOU OF YOUR LUNCH DATE TOMORROW.
THANK YOU, ALFRED.
I DO NEED TO BE RESTED, THEN. SHE'S SHARP AND PERCEPTIVE, MY JULIE.
SHE IS INDEED, SIR.


OF LATE, I HAVE BEGUN TO WONDER IF THE GENETIC BASE IS TO BLAME.
I HAD ORIGINALLY THOUGHT THAT MY MANIPULATIONS WOULD CURE ANY SHORTCOMINGS.
BUT, PERHAPS THAT IS HUBRIS...
AGGGH!
SLAM
SANJAY?!
SANJAY?! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
QUICKLY, PROFESSOR! THE DOOR--
KLAK
umhhhh... THANK YOU, PROFESSOR.
ARE YOU INJURED?
NOT BADLY. THEY'RE JUST... SO WILD THESE DAYS. THEY REJECT THEIR FOOD...
THEY'VE DEVELOPED A TASTE FOR HUMAN FLESH.
SADLY, I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER WE CAN MAINTAIN OUR MENAGERIE.
YES, PROFESSOR. I UNDERSTAND.

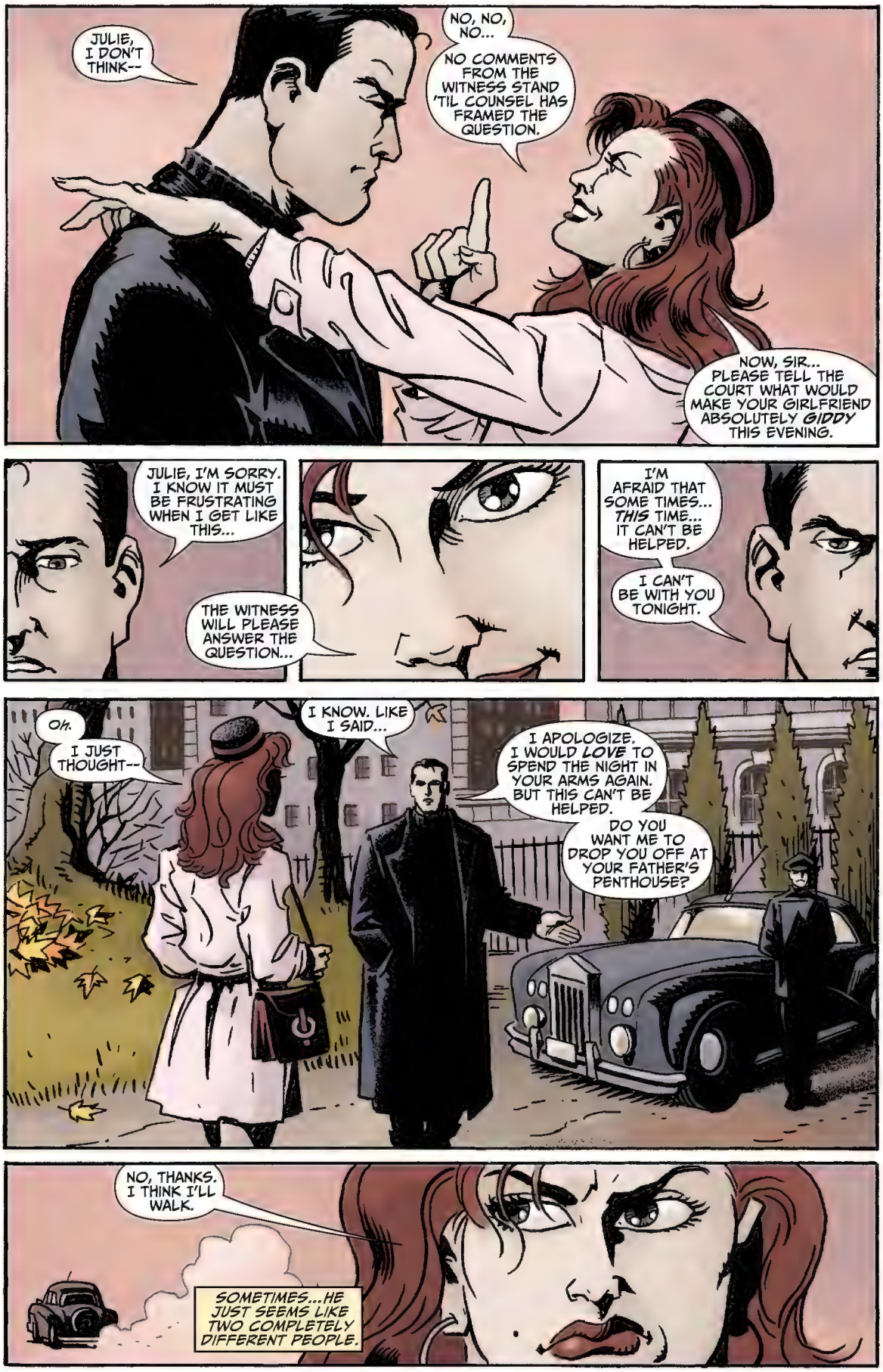

THE WORLD OF BUSINESS IS A STERN MISTRESS.
ALWAYS UNFORGIVING AND OFTEN UNFAITHFUL.
MY YEARS OF VALID SUCCESS DO LITTLE TO CURB MY CURRENT DILEMMAS.
BUT, YOU CAN'T JUST--
MR. MADISON!! I'M SORRY! THESE MEN JUST--
EASY, SISTER.
WE'VE JUST GOTTA HAVE A FEW CHOICE WORDS WITH YOUR BOSS.
DISCUSS HIS... OBLIGATIONS.
IT'S ALL RIGHT, BETTY. PLEASE MAKE SURE WE'RE NOT DISTURBED.
SUCH CONDITIONS TRULY SEPARATE THE MEN FROM THE BOYS.
WHERE'S MARONI? I TOLD HIM I'D HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH ANY OF HIS CHEAP THUGS.
MR. MARONI'S BEEN CALLED OUT OF TOWN. SO, FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE...
...YOU GOTTA DEAL WITH US.
"CALLED OUT OF TOWN"... WHAT IS THAT? MOB-SPEAK FOR "UNDER INDICTMENT"?
HA! SAL SAID YOU WERE A FUNNY GUY...
IN ANY EVENT, I DON'T NEED AND DON'T APPRECIATE THESE STRONG-ARM ATTEMPTS TO INTIMIDATE ME.
TELL YOUR BOSS THAT I INTEND TO MAKE GOOD ON OUR DEAL IN A TIMELY FASHION. AND TELL HIM THAT I HAVE NO INTENTION OF GRANTING FURTHER AUDIENCE TO HIS MUSCLE MONKEYS.
IF HE WANTS TO SPEAK TO ME, TELL HIM TO CONTACT ME HIMSELF.
SAL ALSO SAID YOU'D BE A POMPOUS BASTARD WHO THOUGHT HE ALWAYS HAD THE UPPER HAND.
THIS YOUR DAUGHTER? PRETTY...

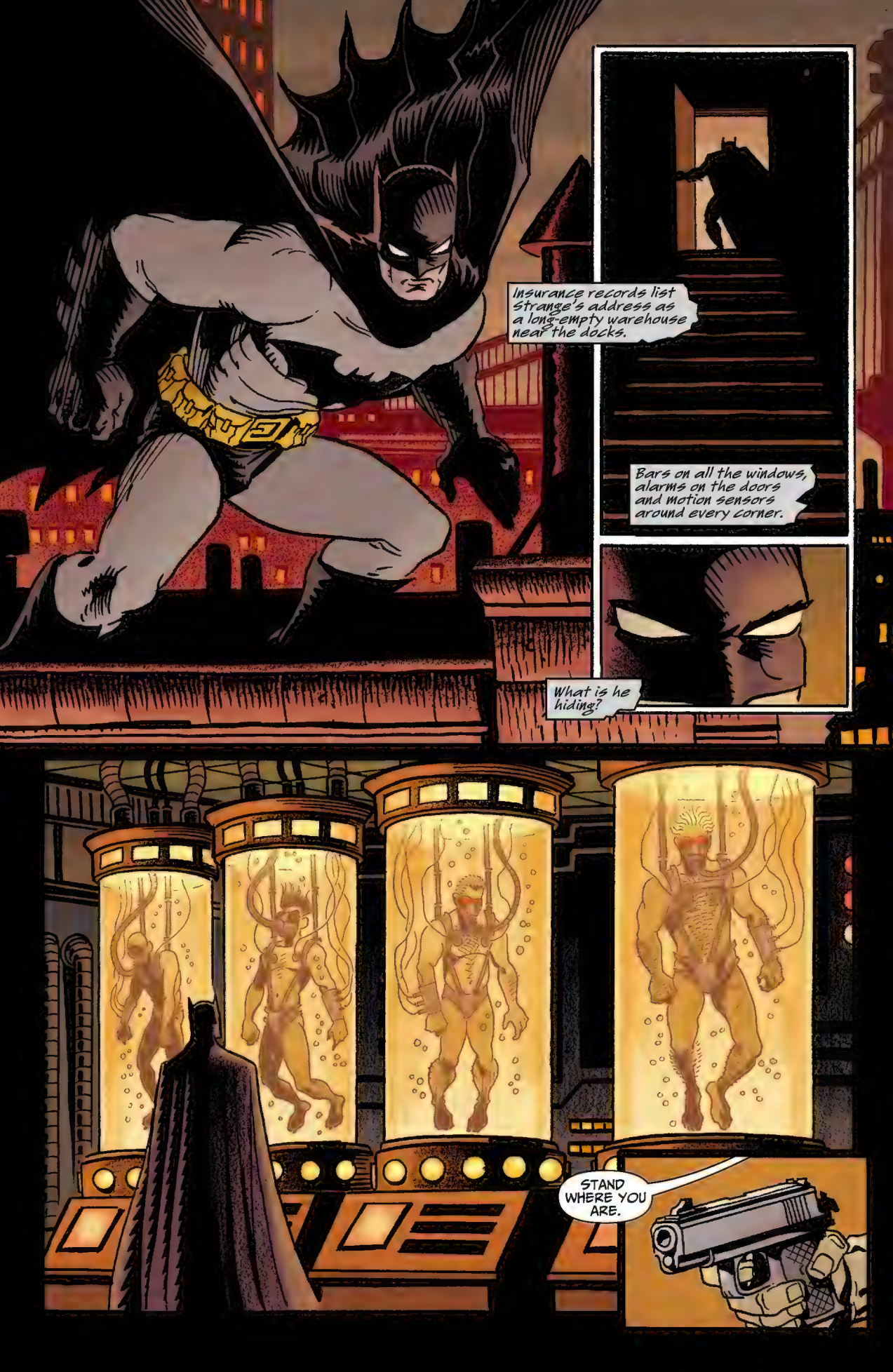
KRAK
YOUR FIRST PAYMENT IS DUE ON MONDAY. SO TAKE YOUR EXCLUSIVE ATTITUDE AND STICK IT IN YOUR... BANK!
WAP
WE'LL SEE YOU THEN... "DADDY."
BUT WHAT SEPARATES THE MEN FROM THE BEASTS?
HEY THERE, TALL, DARK AND MOODY!
I WAS GONNA OFFER A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS... BUT THEN I FIGURED I'D NEED MORE LIKE... WHAT? A MILLION, AT LEAST?
IT'S NOT JUST MY IMAGINATION.


BRUCE REALLY IS AN ENIGMA.
HELLLLLO?
MR. WAYNE?
THAT WAS ONE OF MY PATENTED SURE-TO-GET-BRUCE-TO-SMILE JOKES...
WHAT'S GOT YOU SO DOWN?
AT TIMES, HE SEEMS SO HAPPY TO SEE ME. SO MUCH A PART OF MY LIFE AND MY LOVE.
OH, SORRY.
I'M ALL RIGHT. JUST... PREOCCUPIED.
NO KIDDING! AND I'M THE ONE WORKING ON A LAW DEGREE!

SORRY, JULIE. THERE'S A... BUSINESS PROBLEM THAT'S GOT ME TROUBLED.
SOMETHING THAT'S DEADLY SERIOUS.

OTHER TIMES, IT'S LIKE I'M HARDLY EVEN THERE.
WHAT YOU NEED IS A DISTRACTION!
AND I'M JUST THE ATTORNEY-IN-TRAINING TO MISLEAD YOU!


JULIE, I DON'T THINK--
NO, NO, NO...
NO COMMENTS FROM THE WITNESS STAND 'TIL COUNSEL HAS FRAMED THE QUESTION.
NOW, SIR... PLEASE TELL THE COURT WHAT WOULD MAKE YOUR GIRLFRIEND ABSOLUTELY *GIDDY* THIS EVENING.
JULIE, I'M SORRY. I KNOW IT MUST BE FRUSTRATING WHEN I GET LIKE THIS...
THE WITNESS WILL PLEASE ANSWER THE QUESTION...
I'M AFRAID THAT SOME TIMES... *THIS* TIME... IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
I CAN'T BE WITH YOU TONIGHT.
Oh.
I JUST THOUGHT--
I KNOW. LIKE I SAID...
I APOLOGIZE. I WOULD *LOVE* TO SPEND THE NIGHT IN YOUR ARMS AGAIN. BUT THIS CAN'T BE HELPED.
DO YOU WANT ME TO DROP YOU OFF AT YOUR FATHER'S PENTHOUSE?
NO, THANKS. I THINK I'LL WALK.
SOMETIMES...HE JUST SEEMS LIKE TWO COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PEOPLE.


Insurance records list Strange's address as a long-empty warehouse near the docks.
Bars on all the windows, alarms on the doors and motion sensors around every corner.
What is he hiding?
STAND WHERE YOU ARE.

I WARN YOU, I'VE GOT A GUN AIMED RIGHT AT YOU.
WH-WHO ARE YOU?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE?
DID MARONI SEND YOU?
KRAK
HE STEPS INTO THE LIGHT AND I REALIZE. THIS IS GOTHAM'S MYSTERIOUS VIGILANTE OF RUMOR...THE "BAT-MAN."
HE IS...MOST IMPRESSIVE. POWERFUL, SWIFT AND FRIGHTENING.
HIS EVERY MOVEMENT SO DELIBERATE AND SURE.
MY GOD--!!
SO FAST...
WAIT! DON'T--
DON'T HIT ME AGAIN!
WH-WHAT DO YOU WANT HERE?
THIS IS A PRIVATE RESEARCH LAB...

PRIVATE AND DEFINITELY ILLEGAL. WHO ARE THOSE MEN IN THE TANKS?
AHH!
T-TEST SUBJECTS! HERE OF THEIR OWN ACCORD, I ASSURE YOU!
He's feigning frailty. Though small, his body is muscular and firm.
TESTING FOR WHAT? ANSWER ME!
PLEASE-- DON'T...!
THEY'RE GENETIC TRIALS! SUBJECTS TO BE TRANSFORMED!
INTO WHAT?
Trying to distract me. Why--?
INTO PERFECTION! ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN--
AGH!
Shot.
With a dart.

CHANK
UNGH--
WAK
OONPH--
SANJAY! WATCH OUT!
BLAM BLAM
Tip was drugged. Cowl prevented all but a prick.
Lucky chance.
Concentrate. Ignore the daze--
FWAK

PROFESSOR, QUICKLY!
THE DOOR!
GGACK--
A SHAME...
...SUCH A SPECIMEN.
;gasp¿
SLAM
With each gasping breath...
...the smell becomes stronger.

The same one that hung like a rancid pall over the poker massacre.
NNNGGHH--
RRRAGGHH--
SNRGT--
TO BE CONTINUED